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Setting the Stage
A Critical Analysis of Performance-Based Approaches to Library Instruction

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Article abstract

Within scholarly and professional LIS literature, researchers and practitioners have applied the language, theory, and practices of stage performance to the context of academic library instruction. Recognizing the power of discourse in shaping professional norms and values, I wonder: How might the widespread presence of performance-based approaches to library instruction impact assumptions and expectations of those librarians who provide it? To better identify, interrogate, and imagine the implications of this discourse, this article first provides a review of the scholarship that has contributed to and resisted the phenomenon of library-instruction-as-performance, drawing upon the work of researchers who have engaged with theatrical, dramatic, or comedic approaches to library instruction. Using content analysis and close reading, I then analyze recent academic library conference programs to further understand how this thinking has been brought to life through professional development opportunities. Upon discovering a cluster of emotional themes within these texts, I follow how the discourse of performance in library instruction intersects with the concept of emotional labour in libraries, exploring how performance-based approaches can both demand emotional labour from and provide emotional reprieve to instruction librarians. In doing so, I focus on the interplay of professional discourse in library instruction and behavioural expectations of librarians—including their emotional expressions—to better understand how these phenomena co-exist and reinforce one another.

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ABSTRACT

Within scholarly and professional LIS literature, researchers and practitioners have applied the language, theory, and practices of stage performance to the context of academic library instruction. Recognizing the power of discourse in shaping professional norms and values, I wonder: How might the widespread presence of performance-based approaches to library instruction impact assumptions and expectations of those librarians who provide it? To better identify, interrogate, and imagine the implications of this discourse, this article first provides a review of the scholarship that has contributed to and resisted the phenomenon of library-instruction-as-performance, drawing upon the work of researchers who have engaged with theatrical, dramatic, or comedic approaches to library instruction. Using content analysis and close reading, I then analyze recent academic library conference programs to further understand how this thinking has been brought to life through professional development opportunities. Upon discovering a cluster of emotional themes within these texts, I follow how the discourse of performance in library instruction intersects with the concept of emotional labour in libraries, exploring how performance-based approaches can both demand emotional labour from and provide emotional reprieve to instruction librarians. In doing so, I focus on the interplay of professional discourse in library instruction and behavioural expectations of librarians—including their emotional expressions—to better understand how these phenomena co-exist and reinforce one another.

Keywords: *emotional labour · instruction as performance · library instruction*

RÉSUMÉ

Dans la littérature scientifique et professionnelle sur les sciences de l'information et de la communication, les chercheuses.eurs et praticien.ne.s ont appliqué le langage, la théorie et les pratiques des arts de la scène au contexte de l'enseignement universitaire en bibliothéconomie. Reconnaissant le pouvoir du discours dans le façonnement des normes et des valeurs professionnelles, je m'interroge : Comment la présence généralisée d'approches de la formation en bibliothéconomie basées sur la performance scénique peut-elle avoir un impact sur les hypothèses et les attentes des bibliothécaires qui la dispensent ? Pour mieux identifier, interroger et imaginer

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les implications de ce discours, cet article propose d'abord un examen des travaux qui ont tant contribué que résisté au phénomène de la formation en bibliothéconomie en tant que performance, en s'appuyant sur les travaux des chercheuses.eurs qui se sont engagé.e.s dans des approches théâtrales, dramatiques ou comiques de la formation en bibliothéconomie. En utilisant l'analyse de contenu et la lecture attentive, j'analyse ensuite les programmes de conférences récentes en bibliothéconomie universitaire pour mieux comprendre comment cette pensée a été concrétisée via des opportunités de développement professionnel. Après avoir découvert un ensemble de thèmes émotifs dans ces textes, j'observe la façon dont le discours de la performance dans la formation en bibliothéconomie recoupe le concept de travail émotionnel dans les bibliothèques, en explorant la façon dont les approches basées sur la performance peuvent à la fois exiger un travail émotionnel de la part des bibliothécaires chargés de la formation tout en leur fournissant un répit émotionnel. Ce faisant, je me concentre sur l'interaction entre le discours professionnel dans la formation en bibliothéconomie et les attentes comportementales des bibliothécaires, y compris leurs expressions émotives, afin de mieux comprendre comment ces phénomènes coexistent et se renforcent l'un l'autre.

Mots-clés : *enseignement en bibliothèque · enseignement en tant que performance · travail émotionnel*

A 2016 Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) handbook, *The Craft of Librarian Instruction: Using Acting Techniques to Create Your Teaching Presence*, begins with a problem and its proposed solution. After listing the manifold challenges facing academic librarians with teaching duties, authors Artman, Sundquist, and Dechow submit that adopting acting techniques during instructional preparation and delivery may improve both student and instructor experiences. In a chapter on charisma and chemistry, they compare the responsibilities of an instruction librarian to those of a dramatic actor: during instruction, librarians "become the actor simultaneously aware of audience response, the technical elements of the stage, the intense interactions and interplay . . . all while remaining *in character*, never losing track of the logistics of navigating your moment-to-moment performance" (Artman, Sundquist, and Dechow 2016, 70). In reading this, I was struck by the weight of this directive and all that it entails—logistically, pedagogically, and emotionally. This statement, and others like it, implies that pedagogical excellence requires the skills and mindset of a stage performer—a formidable task for someone who has not trained or prepared in this field. However, as an instruction librarian with no theatrical training, this comparison between instructors and actors still resonated with me, as it reflected the standards to which I try to hold myself: to be unfailingly enthusiastic, engaging, and lively in the classroom, regardless of my own feelings. From where, I wondered, did I

internalize these behavioural expectations of my own teaching? What is the effect of treating instruction like a stage performance?

In the first part of this article, I provide a review of the scholarship that has contributed to and resisted the phenomenon of library-instruction-as-performance, drawing on the work of researchers who have engaged with theatrical, dramatic, or comedic approaches to library instruction. After synthesizing these previous interventions, I analyze the content of conference programs from recent national and international library and information studies (LIS) gatherings—the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Conference, the WILU Conference, and the LOEX Conference—aiming to map out the presence of performance rhetoric in their session descriptions. By tracing the appearance of common themes through content analysis and close reading, I attempt to add texture to the framing of instruction as performance in academic librarianship, and to anticipate how these interventions might affect the workplace lives of instruction librarians. What might they reveal about the pressures that instruction librarians face and the ways in which they cope with unique pedagogical demands?

In the second half of this paper, I focus on the emotion-focused rhetoric that emerged from my conference program analysis, grounding it within the larger scholarly conversation on emotional labour in libraries. In providing an overview of emotional labour research in LIS, I outline how scholars have documented patterns of emotional labour in library workplaces, and further theorize how performance-based discourse in library instruction might impact the emotions that librarians outwardly express or withhold from expressing. In doing so, I speculate how trends and issues in librarian professional development may exacerbate, reify, and potentially alleviate the emotional pressures that are well-documented in library work, whether intentionally or not.

Using these performance-based interventions as a jumping-off point, I explore the interplay between our professional discourse in library instruction and behavioural expectations of librarians—including their emotional expressions—to better understand how these phenomena co-exist and reinforce one another. However, as this paper covers a wide breadth of closely interrelated themes, it stops short of examining how these discursive effects manifest in the real-world practices of instruction librarians. As such, future empirical scholarship on this topic should help to reveal how expectations of performance-based instruction might weigh uniquely on specific populations—such as racialized, early-career, or precariously-employed librarians—and impact their affective experiences in the library classroom and, more generally, their professional lives in academic librarianship.

Theoretical Foundations

Goffman and Dramaturgical Theory

In the LIS literature, several scholars have sought to reveal the performative aspects of academic library work. In particular, many have looked to the work of sociologist Erving Goffman to highlight the theatrical self-presentation work that academic library workers must do to maintain appearances and meet professional expectations. In his seminal text, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman describes how individuals attempt to control the way they are perceived by others, consciously or unconsciously "expressing [themselves] in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response [they are] concerned to obtain" ([1959] 2021, 13). To describe the nature of social life in a workplace, Goffman constructs a metaphorical framework based on theatrical performance, which casts individuals as actors playing characters. According to Goffman's conceit, individuals must dramatize their work activities, emphasize societally-valued behaviours, and conceal expressions that conflict with their idealized character in order to successfully sustain the performance of a role. In addition to other occupational contexts, Goffman's dramaturgical lens has been applied to a variety of educational settings to analyze how instructors handle impression management in the classroom. For example, Preves and Stephenson (2009) discuss role negotiation in the context of team-teaching, Tsaousi (2020) calls upon a dramaturgical framework to interrogate how female university lecturers use dress to control their self-presentation while performing the role of an academic, and Scott (2007) uses Goffman's conceptions of sincere and cynical performances to describe how instructors cope with feelings of stage fright while teaching.

Applications of Dramaturgy to Academic Library Work

LIS research informed by Goffman's theory has typically taken a broad view of academic library responsibilities, including circulation services, reference services, instruction, and library administration, in order to illustrate the various efforts required to orchestrate "the show" of the library itself. Quinn (2005) applies principles of dramaturgy to academic library work, exploring the possibility that most behaviour in academic libraries is influenced by social interactions with—or even just in the presence of—other people. Quinn examines a wide range of common academic library scenarios to theorize how Goffman's six elements of dramaturgy might be present in individual behaviours and social interactions between "characters," whose self-presentation choices (either deliberately or unconsciously) align with a particular role. Quinn speculates how students and staff sustain their

performances by using relevant props, visibly engaging in activities that legitimize their roles, and concealing dissonance between themselves and their idealized roles; in doing so, characters attempt to negotiate the impressions that others form of them in the library space.

With a narrower focus, Cherry and Calvert draw on Goffman's dramaturgical framework to inform their research on librarian perceptions of service models, arguing that "by viewing people as if they are actors it is possible to regard their behaviours as part of a context that is thrust on them" (2012, 203). Cherry and Calvert's study participants use performance metaphors to describe the behaviours involved in library service provision: "Participants agreed that managing the impression they gave while in public was important. They were giving a performance and felt that looking busy was important because that was professional" (206). With a specific eye towards library instruction, Julien and Pecoskie (2009) use Goffman's work on deference behaviour to ground their analysis of how librarians experience their teaching roles. In following "ceremonial rules" to communicate their appreciation of others, participants (i.e., librarians) perform respect and maintain a power dynamic within their relationships with others (i.e., faculty members). Finally, Polkinghorne (2012) draws upon Goffman's self-presentation theory in outlining an autoethnographic exploration project, intending to challenge the "casual equation of teaching and performing" (2) by reflecting on her own library instruction through Goffman's lens of dramaturgy.

Library Instruction-as-Performance: Recommendations and Critiques

Theatrical Approaches to Library Instruction

Broadly, higher education research has long been the site of robust scholarly conversation around the concept of teaching-as-performance and the integration of acting skills into instructional training and delivery. Within the specific domain of library instruction, there is a slim lineage of scholarly and professional literature that addresses (and, in some cases, endorses) the use of performance techniques—theatrical, vocal, or comedic—in library classroom settings. Across these articles, authors describe a range of reasons for focusing on performance techniques, including sharing tips and tricks, theoretical overviews, or critique. Furay's 2014 article, "Stages of Instruction: Theatre, Pedagogy, and Information Literacy," warrants special attention here, as it offers a robust interdisciplinary literature review on performance and instruction in academic libraries. Specifically, Furay argues that instruction librarians share many parallels with stage performers, including

teaching within a limited timeframe and the repetitive nature of library one-shots, and offers lengthy discussion on the importance of preparation "to turn the library classroom into a theater, turn our lesson plan into a playscript and turn ourselves into performers" (2014, 211). Furay encourages readers to consider space, scripts, storytelling, and visual imagery in designing their instruction, and considers the widespread use of performance metaphors to define the instructional role: instructor-as-performer, instructor-as-actor, instructor-as-clown, etc.

Other scholars have taken a practical approach to discussing the implementation of performance-based approaches in library instruction. Antonelli, Kempe, and Sidberry (2000) do so by focusing on seven theatrical elements—voice, humour, movement, costume, props, music, and rehearsal—to improve library instruction, asking of their readers: "Would you not like to make sure you receive the thumbs up rather than the thumbs down from your students? Then try incorporating theatrical techniques into your instruction methodology" (177). They encourage readers to use humour as "an attention-getting device" (180), use movement to energize the audience, and use props to "add sparkle, increase attention, and increase retention" (183). Additionally, Nazario (2010) describes the use of theatre games as a tool for both instruction librarians and students. They illustrate how a theatre game can serve as a developmental exercise for instructional librarians and discuss how integrating a mimicry-based theatre game into a student lesson serves as a jumping-off point to a larger conversation about source authority and provenance.

Comedic Approaches to Library Instruction

Others have drawn upon techniques from improvisational or stand-up comedy to improve library pedagogy. Walker (2006) focuses on using humour to alleviate feelings of library anxiety among students, and argues that humour is an important strategy in reaching a wider swath of students. Pointing to research that demonstrates the impact of humour on student experience and learning environment, Walker recommends ways that library instructors can become comfortable integrating humour into their classrooms, such as having humorous remarks, anecdotes, and icebreakers at the ready. In their exploration of stand-up comedy for library instruction purposes, Trefts and Blakeslee (2000) share practical suggestions for incorporating humorous moments into the library classroom, including playing amusing music or videos, using funny analogies, and integrating humorous examples. Tewell (2014) distills five lessons from the world of stand-up comedy to inspire engaging library instruction. Taking notes from the work of prominent comedians, Tewell proposes that teaching librarians adjust their approaches based on audience reception, vary their teaching tools and share personal

stories to reach a diverse array of learners, and persist through tough moments by re-designing instruction and testing it out again.

Library Instruction as "Edutainment"

Finally, Polkinghorne (2015) unpacks the common conflation of effective teaching and effective entertaining, describing their artificial equation as a "discourse of edutainment" (1). Polkinghorne inquires why, as librarians, we urge each other to increase the entertainment value of our library instruction and highlights several mainstream examples of how edutainment has permeated both popular and scholarly discourses around teaching and learning. Polkinghorne argues for moving away from the edutainment discourse in library instructional design, contending that edutainment diverts instructors from the primary goal of creating effective learning experiences, exacerbates instructors' fears and anxieties around public speaking, and shapes students as passive recipients in need of entertainment.

Methodology

To further understand how performance-based instruction has permeated the professional development landscape of academic librarianship, I undertook a document analysis project, which is "a form of qualitative research that uses a systematic procedure to analyze documentary evidence" (Gross 2018, 544). In this case, recent conference programs from academic library conferences serve as our documentary evidence. Based on an understanding of major North American conferences for academic librarians, I comprehensively sampled conference programs from the ACRL Conference, LOEX Conference, and WILU Conference. I limited my search to English language programs and to the last 10 years (2013-2023). In selecting these programs for inclusion, I worked with the information that is available through conference websites and archives. In cases where conference websites were expired, I contacted conference organizers to obtain copies of the missing programs. In most programs, only the presentation title and abstract are available for review; as such, I chose to screen items for inclusion based on title and abstract only, regardless of whether more information was available. In a few cases, the presentation slides are publicly hosted in an institutional repository or conference website. However, since these contextual materials were not widely available, I have chosen to omit them from my analysis. I recognize the limitations of this approach, as title and abstracts may not capture all elements of theatrical training that could be incorporated within a full-length presentation; however, the methodology is intended to only retrieve presentations in which performance techniques are a core and primary focus.

To analyze this data, I have chosen to use a multi-pronged approach that draws upon two interpretive techniques: qualitative content analysis and close reading. For my purposes, these techniques are intended to function at two different valences of meaning. Content analysis often operates at a macro level, providing "a composite picture of the phenomenon being studied . . . the goal is to depict the 'big picture' of a given subject" (White and Marsh 2006, 39) based on the accretion of observations. Close reading, which is a core technique in literary analysis and communications research, "considers only the internal traits of the text" (Ruiz de Castilla 2017, 136) in order to observe its stylistic choices and critically infer meaning.

To code the content of conference abstracts for qualitative content analysis, I used an inductive approach. Though I derived a sense of initial themes from my research question and from my literature review of performance-based approaches to library instruction, my codebook is based on the emergence of themes and concepts identified while reading and re-reading the presentation titles and abstracts themselves. This practice aligns with White and Marsh's description of an inductive approach, in which "evidence plays almost as significant a role in shaping the analysis as the initial questions" (2006, 37). I coded the data in NVivo 12 to qualitatively identify larger trends and patterns across the corpus of texts.

In adopting this discursively focused approach, I draw inspiration from Polkinghorne's 2015 article on the emergence of edutainment in LIS scholarship. Polkinghorne describes discourse as "a specific way of thinking that underpins activity and language use," and asserts that "identifying this discourse involves analyzing the understandings, assumptions, and power relationships within spoken and written texts" (2). In tracing the presence of edutainment in library instruction literature, Polkinghorne posits that there are real-life implications of discourse to which we, as a profession, need to attend. Additionally, Polkinghorne argues that discourses "have a positioning effect on both individuals and institutions" (4), which ripples outward to influence pedagogical best practices. Here, I hope to build on Polkinghorne's logic and imagine how other discursive trends in library instruction produce their own positioning effects on instructors and the students they serve. In this paper, I attempt to explore how one of these discourses—performance-based approaches to library instruction—contributes to behavioural expectations of instructional librarians by positioning them as performers.

Content Analysis and Close Reading

Seeking ten years of data from the aforementioned North American academic library conferences yielded 26 conference programs to use as a corpus of documentary

evidence. These programs described a wide range of conference programming, including pre-conference workshops, poster presentations, panels, and sessions; for the purposes of this paper, I will refer to them uniformly as presentations. Analyzing this sample of 26 programs generated a small but rich body of presentations on performance-based approaches to library instruction: 15 items in total. To locate these presentations, I hand-searched each conference program, identifying presentation titles and abstracts that contained keywords such as *performance*, *theatre*, *drama*, *improv*, or *comedy*. Upon locating a presentation that contained a keyword of interest, I then screened its title and abstract to evaluate whether it actually focused on a performance-based approach to library instruction.

Across the 15 presentations that contained information on performance-based approaches to library instruction, there was significant variation in their focus and coverage. Primarily, presentations focused on applying performance techniques and theory to the library instructional context: five of these presentations described integrating acting techniques, like warm-ups or role-playing exercises, or other elements of performance, like staging or props, into teaching preparation or practices. An additional five presentations concentrated specifically on employing principles of improvisation while teaching, while one shared strategies on integrating humour into the library classroom. Additionally, three presentations explored and endorsed the adoption of teaching personas. I include these in my larger exploration of performance-based approaches; though not always couched in the language of performance, teaching personas are "the various identities teachers develop and deploy in instructional contexts" (Azadbakht 2021, 59). Given their focus on self-presentation through affect and behaviour, I chose to include and highlight teaching personas in my analysis of performance-based presentations. While the majority of presentations drew their approaches from the dramatic arts (stage acting, improvisation, role-playing, etc.), two presentations centered on principles of vocal performance, including karaoke. Finally, one presentation foregrounded the advantages of designing instructional experiences to mimic the structure of television infomercials.

Thematically coding the titles and abstracts generated a series of high-level themes found across the set of presentations. However, applying a close reading lens to the same texts allows for granular, micro-level analysis that better illuminates the nuances of this professional discourse. Across the presentations, the framing of performance-based approaches to library instruction varies greatly, from academic consideration to enthusiastic endorsement. Some approach the topic from a scholarly distance: one panel "explore[s] the idea of the teaching persona and how it functions within the academic library" (Kellam, Pressley, and Dale 2013), couching its discussion in a conceptual space of consideration. Another presentation on the "use of theater in education" lists one of its objectives as "evaluat[ing] its advantages and

disadvantages" (Montella and Viola 2023), acknowledging that the approach may not be universally adopted by all attendees. However, many presentations are unabashed about their enthusiasm for performance-based approaches, advocating for its value to both instructors and students. Simply put, they assert that these approaches will "earn you two thumbs up from your students and library patrons" (Stoddard, Timpson, and Smith 2017, 35). The future tense of the conference abstract format lends an additional sense of legitimacy to these claims, stating that participants "will" unequivocally achieve the stated aims of the presentation.

Closer examination of presentations reveals two discrete strands within this discourse. Those presentations that promote performance-based approaches to instruction advertise a wide variety of outcomes. However, the promised outcomes can largely be delineated along two lines: those that impact student experience and those that impact instructor development. Though these two concepts are highly interrelated—in that student experience will be eventually affected by instructor development—they are distinct, and parsing this distinction helps to clarify what, exactly, performance-based approaches involve, address, and accomplish.

Close Reading Analysis: Student Experience

In presentations that describe how performance-based approaches will affect student learning, many outcomes are left positive but vague, couched in descriptors like *effective* and *successful*; for example, abstracts claim that instructors will "deepen audience engagement and learning" (Stoddard, Timpson, and Smith 2017, 35) or "achieve desired outcomes" (Donovan and Corbin 2013) in the classroom, but do not elaborate on the mechanics of how these objectives might be attained. Other presentations tie their models to specific pedagogical goals that affect student learning. Shea and Lane (2023) suggest that integrating humour into the classroom can "boost student mental health" and enhance rapport between instructor and students, and McLay Paterson (2019) describes using improvisational comedy to support feminist pedagogical practices in library instruction. In describing the theatrical tenet of "knowing your audience," several presentations also allude to using performance-based approaches to better understand and assess learner needs (Donovan and Corbin 2013; Pappas and Dohe 2016).

However, a significant number of presentations focus on student enjoyment as the intended effect of performance-based approaches to library instruction. In their presentation on using humour with Gen Z students, Shea and Lane (2023) seek attendees who wish to "liven up [their] teaching," while Montella and Viola (2023), in justifying the use of theatrics in educational settings, describe the "amusement and enjoyment" and "captivating nature" of theatre. Similarly, Louis (2013) contends

that vocal techniques can be used to "inspire excitement" in the classroom, and Donovan and Corbin (2013) posit that practicing karaoke will help instructors "create memorable experiences" for their students. These word choices represent a persistent assumption: effective library instruction should be entertaining. Of course, a focus on providing entertainment value does not preclude instructors from also accomplishing other pedagogical aims. However, in identifying this rhetorical pattern, I am reminded of Polkinghorne's work on the concept of edutainment, in which she questions the way that entertainment often serves as a surrogate for learning. Here, too, we see significant emphasis placed on the affective experiences of students: Are they excited? Are they compelled and captivated? The prominence of this discourse within these abstracts is notable, as the high value placed on entertainment may contribute to expectations of behaviour and definitions of success for instruction librarians, thus outweighing other principles of effective teaching.

Close Reading Analysis: Instructor Development

In addition to student outcomes, most presentations focus on the effect of performance-based approaches on library instructors themselves. Several adopt the instructor-as-performer metaphor as a guiding structure: for instance, Rae (2015) frames library instruction as "a performance that unfolds and evolves over time." Others attempt to ease the physical demands of teaching on instructors, offering a range of vocal, breathing, and posture techniques to support librarians in managing the embodied aspects of instruction: from mitigating "vocal tiredness" and "breathlessness while speaking" (Louis 2013) to promoting "physical and mental stamina" (Donovan and Corbin 2013) more generally. However, more conspicuously, presentations on performance-based approaches in library instruction focus on regulating instructor emotion. At once, the conference abstracts serve to a) convey expectations of emotional expression for instruction librarians, and b) offer strategies for coping with those expectations. In other words, the performance-based approaches both amplify the emotional pressures of library instruction and offer an antidote to them.

Presentations on performance-based approaches, like acting or improvisation exercises, are freighted with affective implications for instructors who practice them. When discussing vocal techniques, Louis describes voice as "a tool you can use to convey not just meaning but also warmth and enthusiasm" (2013), going beyond the mechanics of voice to suggest that instructors should hit a particular emotional register when delivering instruction. Another presentation references "harnessing anxiety and endorphins" (Donovan and Corbin 2013) to teach more effectively, explicitly acknowledging the emotional effort that instruction requires

of its practitioners. Rae (2014) admits that instruction-as-performance involves behavioural and affective modifications to effectively reach the audience, and offers guidance on "evaluat[ing] personal physicality and vocal intonation in order to make conscious and intentional changes to improve a connection with students." This body of conference abstracts demonstrates that, indeed, conducting library instruction as though it were a performance requires significant regulation of emotional expression.

This expectation of emotional effort that performance-based approaches impose, though, is counterbalanced by the ways that the same approach might be used to ease emotional strain on instructors in the library classroom. Gareau-Brennan, Carr-Wiggin, and Guy (2021) introduce theatre exercises to help attendees "deal with performance anxiety" (21) in delivering library instruction, and Louis (2013) discusses vocal techniques as "strategies for dealing with illness and stage fright." Several presentations focus on building feelings of instructor confidence in the classroom, especially regarding public speaking (Gareau-Brennan, Carr-Wiggin, and Guy 2021; Rae 2015; 2014). Edwards (2022) employs improv-based training techniques to create a "safe, low-anxiety, accessible, and inclusive workshop setting" (13) in which to develop the skills of instruction librarians, and Donovan and Corbin (2013) use karaoke training to bolster the "mental stamina required for teaching." These interventions, drawn from the stage, can be used to mitigate and cope with the emotional stress that instruction frequently entails.

In sum, a close reading of conference presentations on performance-based approaches to library instruction reveals a professional discourse that is preoccupied with emotion: its effect, its expression, and its management in the classroom. Though presentations on performance-based approaches do address on student learning outcomes, there remains a substantial focus on using these techniques to facilitate a pleasant emotional experience for students (i.e., their enjoyment and entertainment). In this same vein, some performance-based techniques require particular emotional efforts by instructors who employ them. This same body of techniques, though, can also be leveraged to provide support for instructors in managing their own emotions in the classroom.

Emotional Labour in Libraries

If, then, emotion is both a core feature and outcome of performance-based approaches to library instruction, it must be situated within a larger conversation about the role of emotion in academic library work. Harkening back to Polkinghorne (2015), who speaks of the positioning effect of a discourse, I ask: In positioning instructors as performers of emotional labour, and in positioning students as its recipient, how does this discourse fit in with existing scholarship on emotional expectations felt by

instruction librarians? To frame this discussion with previous research, I briefly turn to the literature on emotional labour in academic libraries.

The concept of emotional labour was first articulated by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in her 1983 book, *The Managed Heart*. In her research on occupations that require specific expressions of feeling, Hochschild describes employees working to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" ([1983] 2012, 20)—and, notably, librarianship is one of the professions that Hochschild indicates as requiring emotional labour. This "outward countenance" that Hochschild describes is the act of maintaining an emotional expression that aligns with professional standards of behaviour or is "consistent with organizational goals" (Julien and Genuis 2009, 932). This emotional expression is dictated by display rules, which are the explicit or implicit expectations of emotional display that are required to be successful in a professional role (Matteson and Miller 2013; 2012). When the required emotional expression is different than the one felt by the employee—for example, when a librarian is feeling frustrated, but still outwardly projects patience—the resulting state is one of emotional dissonance.

To achieve the prescribed emotional display, workers can regulate their felt emotions using two different strategies: through deep acting, in which people modify their internal feelings, or surface acting, in which people modify their expressions. Matteson and Miller (2013) describe deep acting as a process wherein employees reframe their thinking prior to expressing an emotion, resulting in a shift in their inner feelings that aligns with the required expression. Conversely, employees practice surface acting when they project an external emotion without adjusting their internal felt emotion. Scholars agree that both deep and surface acting constitute forms of emotional labour, as it takes substantive effort to regulate emotions through either strategy.

There is a rich body of research on emotional labour in academic libraries that shines light on the affective work that librarians do to put others, like students and patrons, at ease. Following their 2012 publication of a research agenda on emotional labour and librarianship, Matteson and Miller (2013) conducted an empirical research study of American librarians that confirmed that emotional labour is an expectation that is prevalent across librarianship, and details its diverse psychological and physiological impacts on library employees. Several scholars note how expectations of emotional labour are encoded into professional practice documents, turning to the American Library Association's Reference and User Services Association (RUSA)'s professional practice document, *Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers* (2013), as a key example of this codification

(Arbuckle 2008; Emmelhainz, Pappas, and Seale 2017; Matteson and Miller 2012; Shuler and Morgan 2013). RUSA's Guidelines, which outline the characteristics of a successful reference consultation, ask the librarian to adapt their behaviour to facilitate an affective experience for the patron, like conveying approachability through eye contact, smiling, and body language. Arbuckle (2008) was one of the first LIS contributors to refract librarianship through an emotional labour lens, examining the RUSA Guidelines to highlight the ways that professional standards of practice impose emotional labour upon librarians. Emmelhainz, Pappas, and Seale (2017) apply content analysis and close reading techniques to the RUSA Guidelines to explore how emotional (and gendered) expectations are embedded within them; they find that 70% of the Guidelines contain some prescription of emotional labour, including the stipulation that librarians will attend to the emotional needs of patrons by suppressing their own.

Importantly, research has documented how emotional labour disproportionately affects women librarians of colour in the workplace. Bright (2016) explores how intersecting gender and racial identities shape individual experiences of emotional and invisible labour loads, finding instances of surface acting, deep acting, and emotional dissonance in the experiences of four women librarians of colour. Most recently, Rhodes, Bishop, and Moore (2023) share their personal experiences of providing emotional and invisible labour as women librarians of colour, including managing their emotions to avoid being stereotyped by their white colleagues and suffering consequences when their behaviour diverges from what white colleagues expect, including when they draw attention to inequities or oppression in the workplace.

The specific emotional demands of library instruction have also been documented. Julien and Genuis's 2009 study illustrates "the central place of affect" (929) in the experience of delivering library instruction. In discovering a wide range of emotions expressed by study participants, the authors posit that "emotional labour is an intrinsic element of instructional work" (934) in libraries. Their study participants identify strong feelings of emotional dissonance that arise from "the display of positive emotions and the suppression of negative emotions" (933) in the library classroom, reporting a tension between their internal feelings of frustration or boredom and their external expressions of enthusiasm. Julien and Genuis note that librarians felt required to project "emotions consistent with organizational goals" (932) when teaching, whether those norms are implicitly socialized or explicitly stated and regardless of their authentic emotional states.

Locating Emotion in Performance-Based Approaches to Library Instruction

In the context of LIS scholarship on emotional labour, further connections materialize between performance-based approaches to library instruction and key concepts in emotional labour research. This is a nuanced association: as Goffman would note, we all modify our behaviour to produce particular social effects, across professions and circumstances. However, when librarians incorporate tenets of theatre, comedy, or vocal performance into their instructional practice, emotional labour serves as the subtext: display rules dictate the objectives of the performance itself, while deep acting or surface acting strategies are required to convey the desired tone, mood, and energy. As performance-based approaches help instructors to adopt new personas, modify their behaviour, or project the correct emotional tenor to successfully reach their audiences, they align with the language of emotional labour, affirming that more is expected of teaching librarians than simply delivering educational content—instead, they must be equipped with the skills to effectively regulate their expressions and behaviours, whether through external or internal means. These implications are ones with material consequences. Consider the ways that different performance-based approaches might inadvertently promote deep acting or surface acting by exhorting librarians to adopt theatrical or comedic exercises: Matteson and Miller (2013) found that surface acting was strongly associated with negative psychological and professional outcomes, like exhaustion and cynicism, but that data on deep acting was mixed, as they found that it was related to both positive and negative outcomes, and might actually support librarians in dealing with emotional demands.

Returning to the peer-reviewed literature, we find numerous examples that reiterate how emotion is, indeed, an integral component of performance-based approaches to instruction. Using Goffman's dramaturgical framework, Quinn describes a hypothetical example of a librarian who "breaks character" during a library instructional session by expressing frustration over a technical issue. In describing this sudden disruption of character, Quinn gestures towards the emotional labour that is normally involved in maintaining a performance: "Such expressions are difficult to suppress and represent a more primal emotional response that is normally concealed by the actor's character" (343). In this featuring this example, Quinn acknowledges that there are felt emotions that must be actively hidden or suppressed as instruction librarians perform their "character" or role.

Those authors who have provided more practical guidance on performance-based library instruction also describe adjusting emotion and its expression as a key part of their approaches. As part of their article on integrating theatrical techniques

into library instruction, Antonelli, Kempe, and Sidberry (2001) opine that "the most exciting accessory" (182) that an instructor can wear in the library classroom is a smile; furthermore, they advocate that the smile should appear authentic, intoning:

> A sincere smile affirms your knowledge, preparation, and desire. It also declares to your audience that you are glad to be there, and you appreciate them. A sincere smile can be the spark that sets off a tremendous explosion—an explosion of acceptance, appreciation, and learning. It is easy to smile after taking the time to prepare and rehearse. (182–3)

Walker (2006) takes a similar approach when describing methods of integrating humour into library instruction, and recommends that instructors "[s]mile / be lighthearted" in order to facilitate a "laugh-ready" atmosphere (122). Walker places the onus on the individual librarian's affect to shift the climate of the classroom towards playfulness:

> Laughter occurs in casual, relaxed, laugh-ready environments where people feel safe and free to be uninhibited. The tone and mood set by the teacher librarian's own demeanor will transfer to the students. For example, if the instructor is constantly smiling and laughing, then the students will react to the playful banter. On the other hand if the atmosphere is formal and stiff and then humor is introduced, the students may not laugh because the previous behavior signals were not aligned to this new signal. (122)

In chalking up classroom climate to instructor affect, Walker inadvertently asks instructors to shift either their internal emotion (deep acting) or their emotional expression (surface acting) to project happiness, regardless of the emotional dissonance it might cause or the emotional labour it might require.

However, just as in the conference programs, some authors identify emotional labour as a coping mechanism for instructors rather than as a burden. When instructors practice deep acting to align their internal feelings with a prescribed emotional expression, it may mitigate feelings of emotional dissonance. Though Hochschild describes deep acting as a type of emotional labour, Furay suggests that "those who feel the pangs of burnout may find succor, conversely enough, by working harder at developing techniques from the Stanislavski method of acting and making even more of an effort to identify with their students" (222). In sum, Furay acknowledges that acting is a form of emotional labour, but suggests that adopting acting techniques can help instructors to feel more authentically expressive, and thus lead to other benefits for instructor wellbeing. This supposition is supported by Matteson and Miller's 2012 research agenda, which indicate that deep acting serves a preferable alternative to surface acting, and should be encouraged by employers.

Conclusion

In an oft-cited quote, Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) assert: "The experience of work is saturated with feeling" (98). This, too, has been my own experience, as an academic

librarian who teaches frequently. The experience of providing library instruction is particularly fraught with emotion—at times, internal emotion that runs counter to the expressions of patience and enthusiasm that I attempt to outwardly project. In moments of pressure to perform feelings that I do not feel internally, I have often thought: From where did I absorb these ideas of which emotions are acceptable for instructors to express?

If modifying one's behaviour—including tone of voice, movements, and energy levels—in order to elicit a particular response in others constitutes a form of emotional labour, then instructional models that rely on theatrical, comedic, or other performative arts serve as a fascinating point of study. The themes that emerge from the peer-reviewed literature and an analysis of recent conference presentation abstracts demonstrate the prevalence of performance-based approaches to library instruction. From within the instruction-as-performance discourse emerges a confluence of emotional themes: the emotional experience it facilitates for students, the emotional labour that is required of its practitioners, and the emotional reprieve it can provide those who experience feelings of burnout from the repetitive strain of library instruction.

This discourse, like all discourses, shapes norms and expectations of those within its purview. However, this paper is narrow in its scope, and refrains from fulsomely exploring the implications of this discourse in practice. In further investigating performance-based approaches to library instruction, we can more acutely identify the range of behavioural expectations placed upon instruction librarians, explore their potential sociocultural sources, and better imagine potential ways to support colleagues and peers in managing their own emotion-laden experiences of delivering library instruction. There are several directions in which future research might evolve: interrogating the ways in which the application of performance-based approaches refract differently through intersections of identity, such as race or class; grappling with the uneven emotional pressures placed upon librarians of different positionalities; or reflecting upon how instruction-as-performance might be underpinned by a neoliberal logic that guides institutional imperatives and culture. Additionally, it would be valuable to explore how this discourse extends beyond the realm of academic librarianship to affect librarians who teach in other library contexts, such as public or special libraries. With these possibilities in mind, I hope that this paper serves as a starting point for further inquiry and invites reflection upon the ways that the rhetoric of performance has—or has not—shaped instructional practices of readers.

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